

Mrs Dunbar

While the health visitor was visiting a mother with postnatal depression the mother said that she had begun to have problems with her 20-month old son when putting him to bed. Bedtime was particularly difficult as she was usually trying to breast-feed and settle her five-month old daughter at the same time. In an attempt to deal with the problem she had started to leave him to cry so that he would know that his crying would not result in him getting what he wanted. However, she was finding it increasingly difficult as she did not like to hear him cry and it was not working anyway. Having contained the mother's anxieties during the visit the health visitor introduced the concept of reciprocity, by talking about the possible messages her son might be getting from being left to cry, why he might be crying and what messages the mother wanted to pass to him. The mother decided that she wanted her son to feel it was bedtime, and he could go to sleep because he knew mum was not far away and would come if he needed her. Based on this a gradual 'disappearing chair' approach was suggested. At the next contact the mother said that this had not worked and she had decided that what was needed was to go back to the start and lie down with him until he had gone to sleep. She told him that it was bedtime and so no talking. She then put her finger to her lips and said 'shush', as she was sure he understood what this meant. Then after two nights she sat on the floor and gradually stood up and moved closer to the door. Each time her son would attempt to get up she would put her finger to mouth and say 'shush'. After about five nights she was able to go outside the door and if she heard him get up she would put her hand inside the door and point her finger, as though she was about to say 'shush' which she did not do. By the fifth night her son was taking about ten minutes to settle down and was sleeping through the night. Although the mother felt that the initial approach had been unsuccessful it was clear

that through the use of the Solihull Approach the mother had internalised the concept of reciprocity and individualised the behaviour management to meet the needs of her son. She had taken the basics of behaviour management and adapted them demonstrating a new awareness and sensitivity for her son's emotions.